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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT AF/E FOR E PRATT, AF/RSA FOR J NAY, AF/EPS FOR M
NORMAN
DEPT PASS TO AID FOR AF/W OFFICE
NAIROBI AID/OFDA FOR J MYER AND REDSO/ESA FOR W
KNAUSENBERGER
LONDON, PARIS, BRUSSELS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: TANZANIA'S FOOD SHORTAGE: GOVERNMENT REQUESTS
INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

SUMMARY

1. (SBU) The Government of Tanzania (GOT) called all heads of mission to Dodoma, the legislative capital, on February 13 for a briefing by Prime Minister Edward Lowassa on the food crisis in Tanzania. On February 14, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Dr. Asha Rose Migiro, held another briefing for all heads of mission and representatives of international organizations in Dar es Salaam, requesting assistance from the international community to cope with affects of the ravaging drought. The Embassy was represented by Charge d'Affaires, Pamela White.

2. (SBU) The GOT explained that Tanzania's food security has deteriorated rapidly following the failure of the short rains ("vuli"), which normally start in September and continue through December. Through a Rapid Vulnerability Assessment (RVA), the GOT has estimated that more than 3.7 million Tanzanians are affected by food insecurity. The GOT is requesting food assistance of 100,000 metric tons to last until the next harvest in May 2006. The RVA estimated that of the 3.7 million people affected by food insecurity, 564,726 people are "destitute" or in need of emergency food handouts. END SUMMARY.

Rain Patterns in Tanzania Have Been Erratic

3. (SBU) For the past three years, rainfall has been erratic in many parts of Tanzania, impacting food production, livestock and water levels in lakes and rivers. On February 13, Prime Minister Lowassa explained to heads of missions and development agencies that as early as August 2005, the Prime Minister's Office, in collaboration with the Food Security Information Team (FSIT), began a Rapid Vulnerability Assessment (RVA) to determine the total population vulnerable to food shortage and the amount of food assistance required. The FSIT team comprised various stakeholders including experts from the Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Cooperatives, World Food Program, the Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWS NET), etc. The August-September 2005 assessment indicated that more than 600,000 people in 35 districts were food insecure and would need a total of 21,499 metric tons of maize to last from November 2005 to January 2006. In response, the GOT approved the distribution of 21,499 metric tons of maize from its Strategic Grain Reserves to the affected districts.

Follow-up Assessment in January 2006

4. (SBU) In the face of continuing drought, Lowassa explained that the FSIT undertook a follow-up field assessment from January 22 to February 3, 2006, deploying 20 teams to 77 districts located in 17 different regions of the country. The assessment showed that Tanzania's food shortage is both acute and widespread, affecting 77 districts which is 85 percent of all districts in Tanzania. The RVA estimated that 3,764,843 persons are suffering from food insecurity and need assistance of approximately 100,000 metric tons to last up

to the next harvest in May 2006. Out of the 3.7 million people identified as "food insecure," an estimated 564,726 people were determined "destitute" or in need of emergency food handouts of about 15,000 metric tons.

15. (SBU) The hardest hit regions in terms of "destitution" or people in need of emergency food handouts are: Shinyanga - 112,990 people; Tabora - 77,006 people; Mwanza - 74,266 people; Dodoma - 54,516 people; Arusha - 33,371 people; and Singida - 29,259 people. As of February 14, 2006, Tanzania had a Strategic Grain Reserves (SGR) of 56,620 metric tons (MT); this will be distributed to food insecure groups from mid-February 2006.

Requests to Donors

16. (SBU) PM Lowassa and FM Migiro officially requested that the heads of missions and development agencies consider assistance in three key areas:

- (i) contribution of food relief up to 100,000 MT of grain (including replenishing some of the depleted SGR);
- (ii) provision of 3,434 MT seed assistance (various types depending on agro-ecological zones)
- (iii) transfer of skills and technology to improve agricultural productivity particularly in the area of irrigation.

17. (SBU) Both Prime Minister Lowassa and Foreign Minister Migiro identified the major cause of Tanzania's current food crisis as the failure of short rains from September through December 2005, causing crop failure and livestock deterioration. They also highlighted other key factors behind the Tanzania's widespread food insecurity including rising food prices and a deficit of seeds in the affected areas. According to the RVA, food shortages in adjacent countries, including Burundi, Malawi, Zambia and the DRC, have exacerbated the rising maize prices. Maize continues to be exported across Tanzania's long porous borders in small quantities, but at a high frequency, to neighboring countries.

Serious Armyworm Threat Looming

18. (SBU) While the appeal to donors from high level GOT officials focused on drought as the causal factor in Tanzania's food shortage, a secondary issue that could also be a serious threat to the food supply is widespread reports of armyworm outbreaks--a serious pest of staple crops such as maize and rice. Working level officials in the GOT Ministry of Agriculture are concerned that the annual appearance of this crop pest could be the most severe in more than a decade. The USAID mission staff in Tanzania and USAID regional officials from REDSO/Nairobi are meeting in Arusha beginning February 15 to assess the extent of the armyworm infestation threat and if USG assistance might be needed to mitigate the pest's impact on Tanzania's food crops.

COMMENT

19. (SBU) In post's view, the minimum amount of food needed by the GOT immediately to get through this food shortage crisis is approximately 120,000 metric tons (MT). However, the GOT has requested 100,000 MT to be able to replenish the country's Strategic Grain Reserves that the government has already begun to tap into to alleviate hunger in the most severely affected areas. The GOT has also made known that the government would welcome cash contributions to assist with the transportation and distribution of food. On February 14, the Belgian government pledged USD 250,000 to purchase food while the VodaCom Communications company pledged USD 1 million in cash assistance to be used by the GOT as needed to alleviate the food shortage.

110. (SBU) Post is concerned about further depletion of Tanzania's food supply due to severe outbreaks of armyworm. We will continue to closely monitor both the findings of the USAID team now on the ground in Arusha and the Ministry of Agriculture's internal assessment of next steps to mitigate this threat.

WHITE